THE SANDMAN ✦ UNIVERSE

Lucifer

"Stylishly dark and smart."
—AiPT!

5

DC VERTIGO

MATURE READERS

Dan *Watters*
Max *Fiumara*
Sebastian *Fiumara*
Dave *McCaig*

S-SO COLD.
FECK IT. FECKIN' LOT OF YOU.
KICK ME OUT OF THE PUB FOR A SMALL MATTER LIKE MONEY. DON'T YE ALL KNOW WHO I AM?
I'M THE MAN WHO BESTED THE DEVIL.
HE CAME FOR MY SOUL, AND ON THE WALK TO HELL I BEGGED HIM FOR A FINAL MEAL--JUST AN APPLE FROM THE ORCHARD WE WERE PASSING.
HE KNEW THE SWEETNESS OF THE FRUIT WOULD MAKE THE SUFFERINGS TO FOLLOW ALL THE WORSE.
SO HE CLIMBED UP TO FETCH IT FOR ME.
THAT'S WHEN I STRUCK. SURROUNDED THE TREE WITH CROSSES, DIDN'T I?
THE LORD'S SYMBOL, WHICH SATAN CANNOT PASS.
HE BEGGED ME TO LET HIM DOWN, AND I DID. BUT ONLY IF HE PROMISED TO RELINQUISH HELL'S CLAIM ON MY SOUL.
THINGS HAVE BEEN A LITTLE ROUGH SINCE, I'LL ADMIT IT. BUT... AT LEAST THE MEMORY'S WARMING...
AT LEAST...
EXPOSURE. NOT THE BEST WAY TO GO, BUT NOT TOO MESSY, AT LEAST.
SO THAT WAS DEATH, EH?

EVERYONE MAKES SUCH A *FUSS* ABOUT IT.
AT LEAST I'M NOT *COLD* ANYMORE. SURE, I CAN'T *FEEL* ANYTHING AT ALL.
"BUT THEN I *FELT* SOMETHING, ALL RIGHT. FOR THAT'S WHEN I HEARD *IT.*
"AND TO THIS DAY I *WEEP* TO REMEMBER.
"THAT'S WHEN I HEARD THE CALL OF *HEAVEN.*
"I HEARD *PROUD* ANGEL SONG, MELODIES OF *PURITY* AND RHYTHMS OF *GLORY.*
"I HEARD HOW PROUD *THE MAKER* WAS OF US, EVEN WE *WAYWARD* CHILDREN.
"EYES BRIMMING, GHOSTLY HEART *SWELLING,* I CALLED TO THEM."
TAKE ME NOW, *FATHER,* RETURN ME TO YOUR BOSOM. LET ME BE *PURE* AND *GOOD!*

HOW DOES ONE REACH YOUR GATES?
DOES A GRAND STAIRWAY DESCEND?
I'LL HAPPILY CLIMB A ROPE LADDER, IF I'M NOT WORTH THAT TROUBLE.
DOES ONE EXPECT TO GROW DOVE'S WINGS TO SOAR AS ANGELS DO INTO PROVIDENCE?
I'LL SETTLE FOR MANGLED PIGEON FEATHERS, IF YOU'LL HAVE ME...
WHO ARE YOU, WHO SEEKS TO ENTER THE GATES OF THE SILVER CITY?
SOME WRETCH...
I AM HAPPY JACK!
HE FAMOUS FOR DEFEATING SATAN, OF COURSE. A LITTLE ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES, SURE ENOUGH, BUT A SERVANT OF THE LORD NONETHELESS.
YOU ARE...
...A CHEATER AND A LIAR. THEY CALL YOU STINGY JACK.
YOU ARE NOT WELCOME IN PARADISE.
I MUST BE! ALLOW ME TO SERVE IN PURGATORY. AS LONG AS IT TAKES. OR TO REMAIN ON EARTH AS HIS SERVANT.
YOU ARE UNWELCOME. UNWANTED. AND NEITHER CAN YOU STAY EARTH-BOUND.

THEN WHERE? WHERE CAN I GO?
HMM.
PERHAPS THE DEVIL WILL *STILL* TAKE YOU.

HELLO, LITTLE SPIRIT.
DID YOU FIND YOUR WAY TO OUR GATES ALL ALONE?
I--I TOOK THIS LANTERN TO LIGHT MY WAY HERE. BUT I HAD TO BLOW IT OUT. I SAW-S-S-SAW--
I, UH-- I NEED TO TALK TO YOUR MASTER.
YOU NEED TO--
WAHAHAHA!
CRUSTBUBBLE, COME HEAR THIS!
YOU'RE A BOLD FOOL, LITTLE MORTAL.
WHAT DO YOU RECKON? FOR THE FLAYING PITS, OR THE SWALLOWING WALL?
NEITHER.
HE SHALL HAVE HIS AUDIENCE.
L-LORD LUCIFER. WE DID NOT MEAN--
HMM? OH. YOU TWO CAN GO.
HELLO, JACK. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

YOU WIN. YOU WIN, ALL RIGHT? THERE'S NO PLACE IN HEAVEN FOR ME. I CAN ONLY PASS ETERNITY HERE.
BUT, JACK... WE GAVE YOU OUR WORD, DID WE NOT? THAT WE WOULD NEVER TAKE YOUR SOUL.
WE DO NOT GO BACK ON OUR WORD.
LOOK AROUND FOR THE FIRST AND ONLY TIME AT THE PEAKS AND VALLEYS OF DAMNATION.
YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE, STINGY JACK.
YOU TRICKED ME.
OH NO. IT WAS YOU WHO TRICKED US, REMEMBER?
HERE. WE WOULD NOT HAVE A WEARY TRAVELLER LEAVE OUR GATES EMPTY-HANDED.
A FLAME OF HELL FOR YOU, TO LIGHT YOUR WAY.
FOR IT WILL BE A LONG, DARK ETERNITY FOR YOU, WE FEAR.

"AND FOR CENTURIES, IT WAS. I WALKED OUT INTO THE BLACK GAP BETWEEN PLACES--*BEYOND* ALL PLACES.

"AND I FELT--
NOTHING.
"NO RAGE, NO COLD, NO HEAT, NO MOTION, NO WIND...
"BEFORE LONG, I BEGGED FOR MY STOMACH TO HUNGER, FOR A GNAWING TO GROW IN MY INSIDES--FOR THAT WOULD BE SOMETHING TO FEEL.
"I BEGGED FOR A MONSTROSITY TO LOOM BEFORE ME, TO BREACH THE MONOTONY OF THE SPRAWLING VOID MY LAMP SHEW ME.

"EVENTUALLY I SENSED *OTHER* THINGS IN THE HOLLOW EMPTY WITH ME, DRAWN TO THE LIGHT--BUT THESE WERE MOCKING THINGS, THAT I COULD NOT SEE, NOR FEEL, NOR HEAR.

"BUT WHEN THESE *DARK* THINGS TRAVELED WITH ME, IT LESSENED THE NUMBNESS, JUST A TOUCH, JUST A SMIDGE--AND PERHAPS BY THIS, I FOUND MY WAY *HOME*...

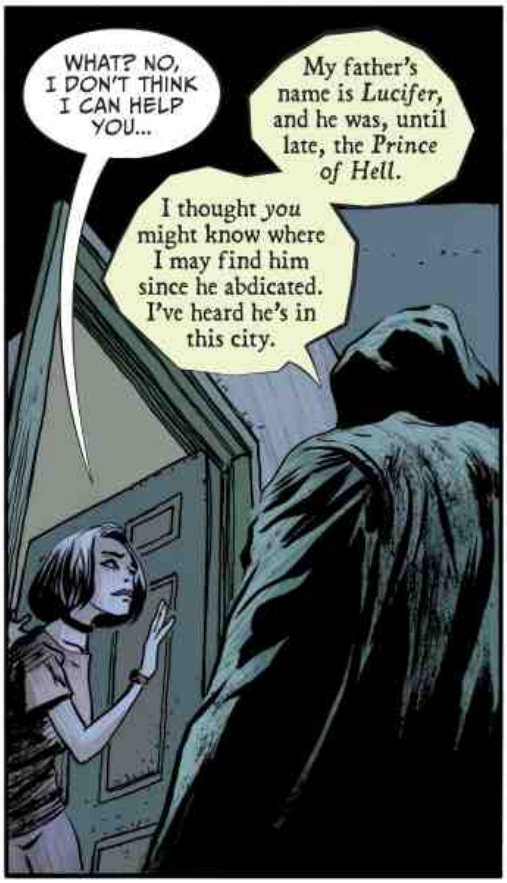
"AND YET I FOUND NOTHING *CHANGED* FOR ME."
E.S.P.

"I STILL BURNED WITH NULLITY. WENT UNSEEN, UNHEARD. *UNFEELING.*
"THOUGH I WAS BACK WITHIN IT AND MOVED THROUGH IT, I FULLY *LACKED* THE WORLD.

"SO I SEARCHED FOR A PLACE I COULD BELONG...WHERE I COULD *EXIST.* BUT IT WAS NOT THERE, I THINK, TO BE FOUND.

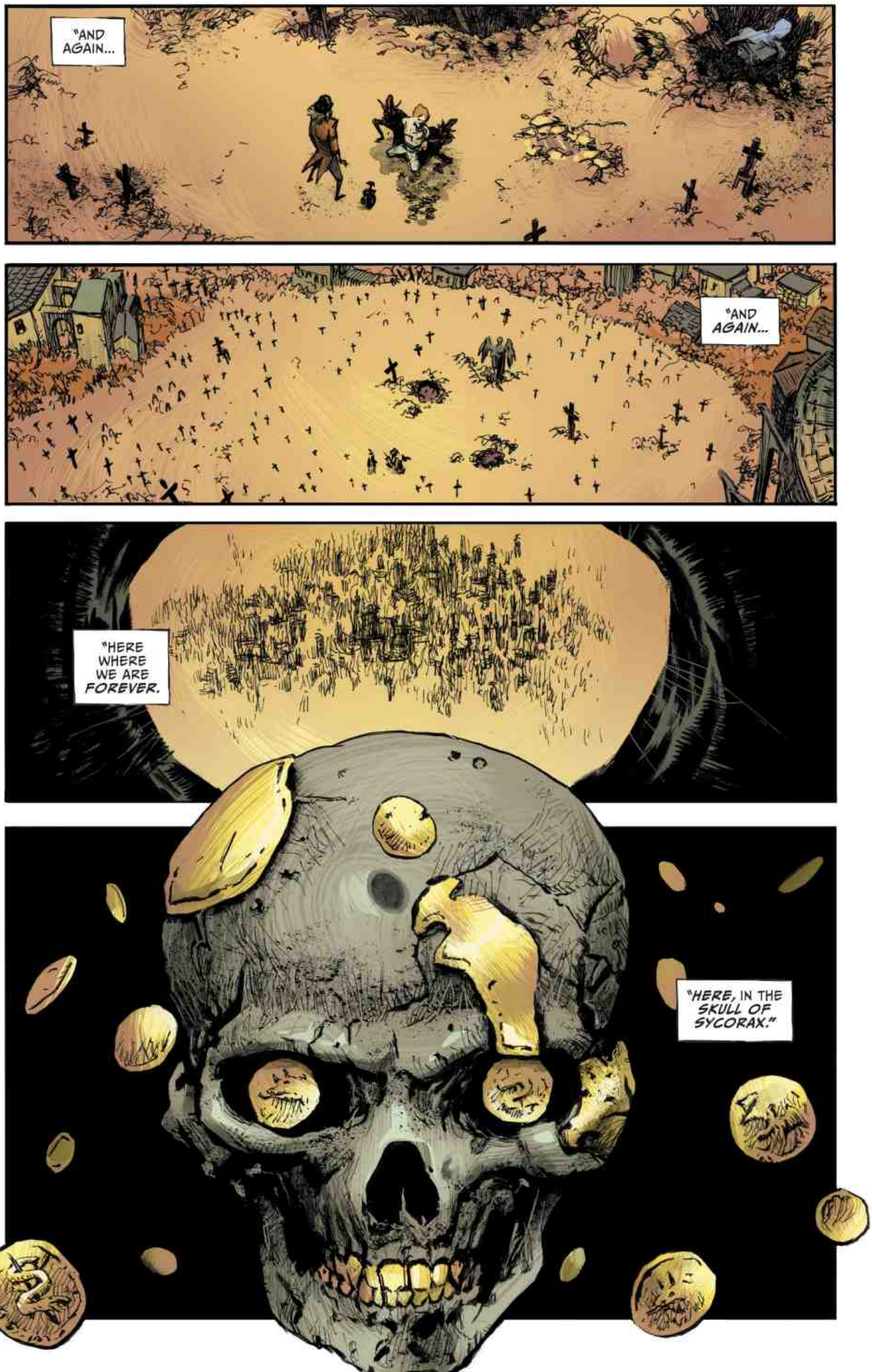
"UNTIL EVENTUALLY MY PATH CROSSED *HIS.* ANOTHER ROOTLESS WANDERER OF THE CENTURIES.
Ms. Penelope Ewell?
NO... MRS.DECKER, NOW.
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I am looking for my *father.* My sources tell me you may have met him?

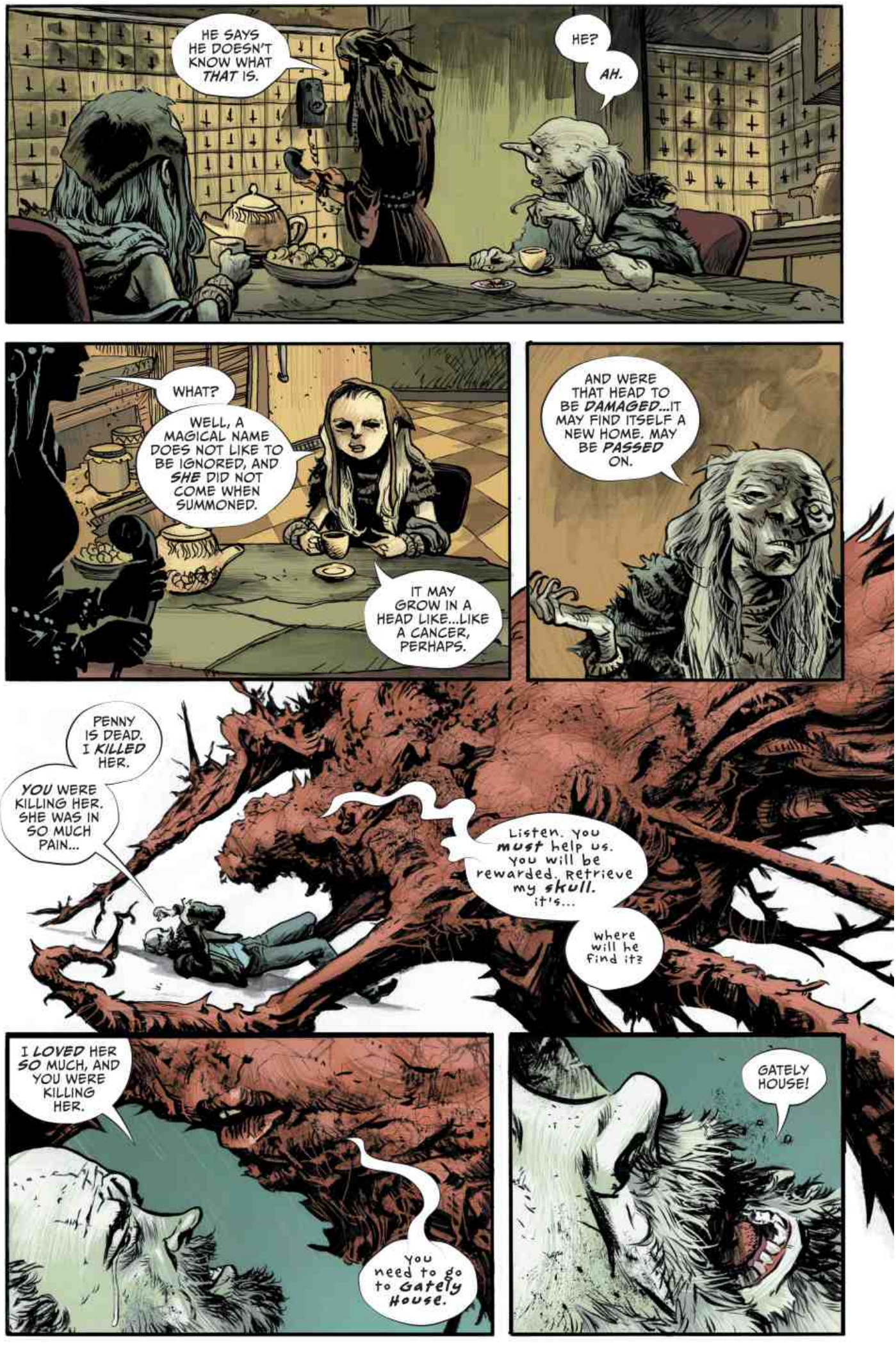

WHAT? NO, I DON'T THINK I CAN HELP YOU...
My father's name is *Lucifer,* and he was, until late, the *Prince of Hell.*
I thought *you* might know where I may find him since he abdicated. I've heard he's in this city.

WH-WHO ARE YOU? HOW DARE YOU?
STAY AWAY FROM ME!
Please--
Please.
"I RECOGNIZED *YOU* WITHIN HIM RIGHT AWAY, LUCIFER..."

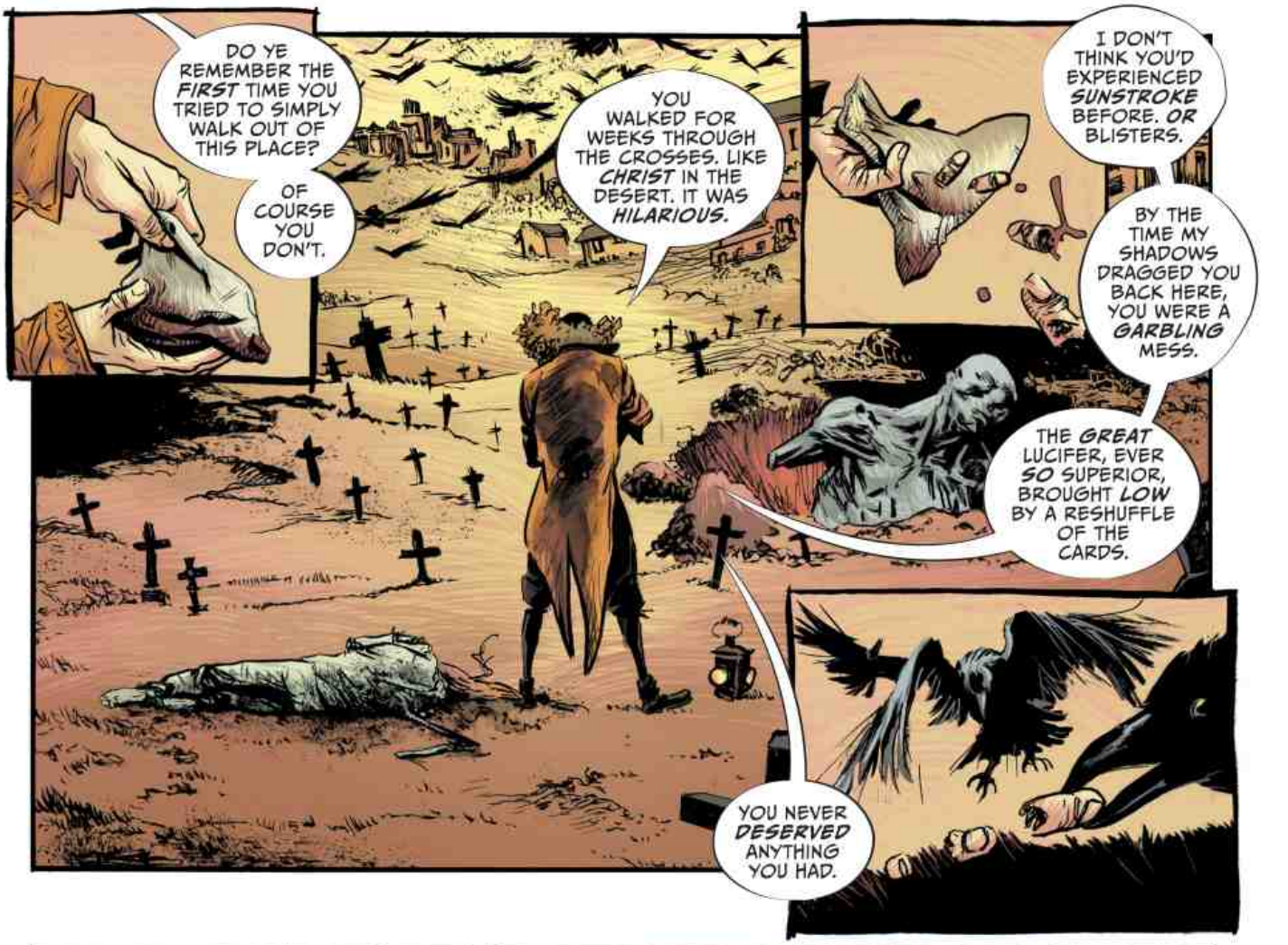
HE WAS SO FECKIN' *PATHETIC.*
IT WAS EASY ENOUGH TO *WHISPER* IN HIS EAR. TO LEAD HIM TO YOU. TO, IN TURN, HAVE HIM CONVINCE *YOU* TO COME HERE, AS A MATTER OF HONOR.
AND NOW...
WELL. HERE I CAN *FEEL* YOUR BLOOD AS IT DRIES STICKY ON MY ARM.
I CAN *TASTE* THE SALT ON MY LIPS, AND *HEAR* THE SNAP OF YOUR BONES IN MY EARS.
THIS PLACE IS *BEAUTIFUL,* AND EACH DAY I WISH TO DRINK IT ALL IN, TO GORGE MYSELF ON EVERY RAY OF SUNLIGHT. ON EVERY NOSE-IRRITATING DUST MITE.
YOU WON'T *RUIN* THAT FOR ME, LUCIFER.
NOW THAT YOU KNOW WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT, I'LL TURN YOU TO CONFETTI AND SCATTER YOU TO THE WINDS.
YOU'VE WASTED SO MUCH EFFORT ON STICKING YOUR BODY BACK TOGETHER OF LATE. IT'LL TAKE *YEARS* FOR YOU TO BE *WHOLE* AGAIN.
AT WHICH POINT, YOU'LL HAVE FORGOTTEN *EVERYTHING* YOU WORKED OUT.
AND WE CAN START FROM *SCRATCH.*
AGAIN...
UHHKK...


"AND AGAIN...
"AND AGAIN...
"HERE WHERE WE ARE FOREVER.
"HERE, IN THE SKULL OF SYCORAX."

HE IMAGINES THAT HE CAN HEAR THE TUMOR IN HIS BRAIN AS IT GROWS.
HIS THOUGHTS ARE SILT THROUGH HIS FINGERTIPS.
HE CLINGS TO WHAT IS AROUND HIM--THE PHYSICAL WORLD THAT CANNOT SLIP AWAY FROM HIM--THEN WONDERS IF HE'S BETTER OFF EMBRACING OBLIVION.
THE BODY ON THE FLOOR LOOKS FAMILIAR.
THE MEMORY OF HOW THE CORD FELT IN HIS HANDS AS HE PULLED IT TAUT IS A VAGUE SHADOW OF PANIC.
AND THERE, TOO, IS THE STRANGE IRON PENDANT ON ITS BROKEN THONG. HE REMEMBERS THAT HE WAS WEARING IT.
HE REMEMBERS THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT HE WEAR IT, BECAUSE OTHERWISE...
BECAUSE OTHERWISE...
GRAAAH!
...OTHERWISE HE IS NOT HIDDEN FROM MONSTERS.
At last!
You finally pick up.
something was blocking the signal before, I think.
you are they who wore my name, yes? The cult of Sycorax.
I--I--


HE SAYS HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT *THAT* IS.
HE?
AH.
WHAT?
WELL, A MAGICAL NAME DOES NOT LIKE TO BE IGNORED, AND *SHE* DID NOT COME WHEN SUMMONED.
IT MAY GROW IN A HEAD LIKE...LIKE A CANCER, PERHAPS.
AND WERE THAT HEAD TO BE *DAMAGED*...IT MAY FIND ITSELF A NEW HOME. MAY BE *PASSED* ON.
PENNY IS DEAD. I *KILLED* HER.
YOU WERE KILLING HER. SHE WAS IN SO MUCH PAIN...
Listen. You *must* help us. You will be rewarded. Retrieve my *skull*. it's...
where will he find it?
I *LOVED* HER *SO* MUCH, AND YOU WERE KILLING HER.
you need to go to *Gately House*.
GATELY HOUSE!

WHUH ARE YUH DEWUNG, CUHLIBUH?
Mr.Ewell--the witches' familiar--has yet to return.
ATELY
HOUSE
ER LIVING
CILITY
TO
IVE
SAIN
Someone must have released the other human--*John Decker*--from this place. You say it could not have been one of your demons.
And so, perhaps someone *else* has been interfering with the plan.
And look.
We indeed had a *cuckoo* in our nest.
Hexafoils. To repel witches--or to *trap* them.
HE *DAHED* BESHRAY ROAHD RUCIFUH?
Powerlessness can make men dare in unexpected ways.
AARGH
Mother?!
RUHCIFUH!
THE MAN HAS SHED PIECES OF HIMSELF ON THE WAY OVER HERE. THE FACES OF ACADEMY FRIENDS. LAZY DAYS WITH HIS WIFE.
HIS OWN NAME.
BUT HE REMEMBERS THAT THE SCREAMING THING THAT CALLS TO HIM IS EVIL...
AND THE MAN KNOWS THAT HIS LAST ACT BEFORE HE DIES MUST BE TO DESTROY IT.


DO YE REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU TRIED TO SIMPLY WALK OUT OF THIS PLACE?
OF COURSE YOU DON'T.
YOU WALKED FOR WEEKS THROUGH THE CROSSES. LIKE CHRIST IN THE DESERT. IT WAS HILARIOUS.
I DON'T THINK YOU'D EXPERIENCED SUNSTROKE BEFORE. OR BLISTERS.
BY THE TIME MY SHADOWS DRAGGED YOU BACK HERE, YOU WERE A GARBLING MESS.
THE GREAT LUCIFER, EVER SO SUPERIOR, BROUGHT LOW BY A RESHUFFLE OF THE CARDS.
YOU NEVER DESERVED ANYTHING YOU HAD.

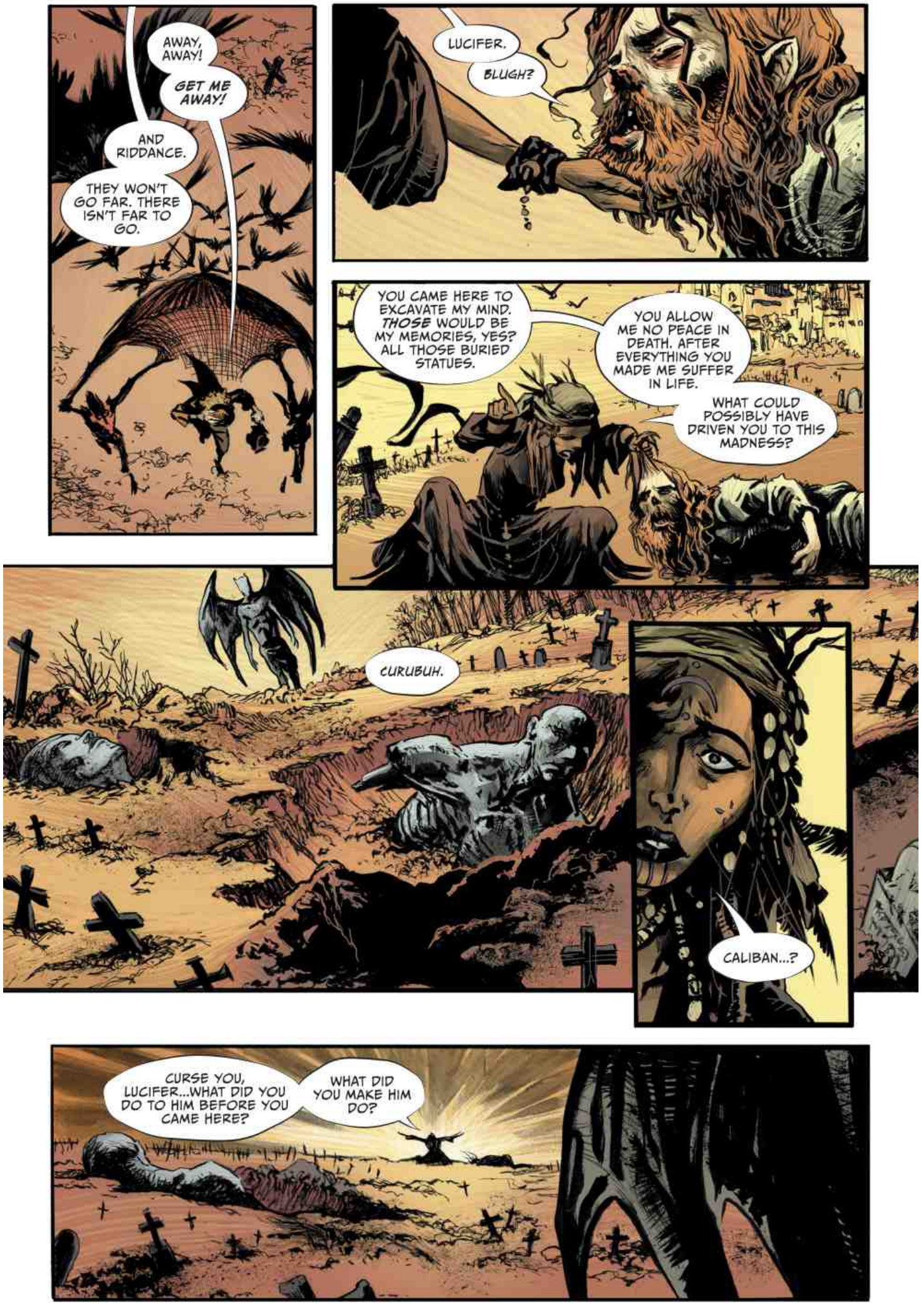
BUT I DESERVE THIS PLACE, SOMEWHERE I FINALLY BELONG. WE'LL BE STAYING, I THINK. PERPETUALLY.
BUT, JACK...

...YOU'RE SIMPLY NOT WELCOME HERE.

OH. MS.SYCORAX. WE WEREN'T EXPECTING FURTHER COMPANY.
WELL. THIS IS MY OWN HEAD, ISN'T IT?
I'D EXPECT A CERTAIN SAY-SO ON COMINGS AND GOINGS, AT LEAST.

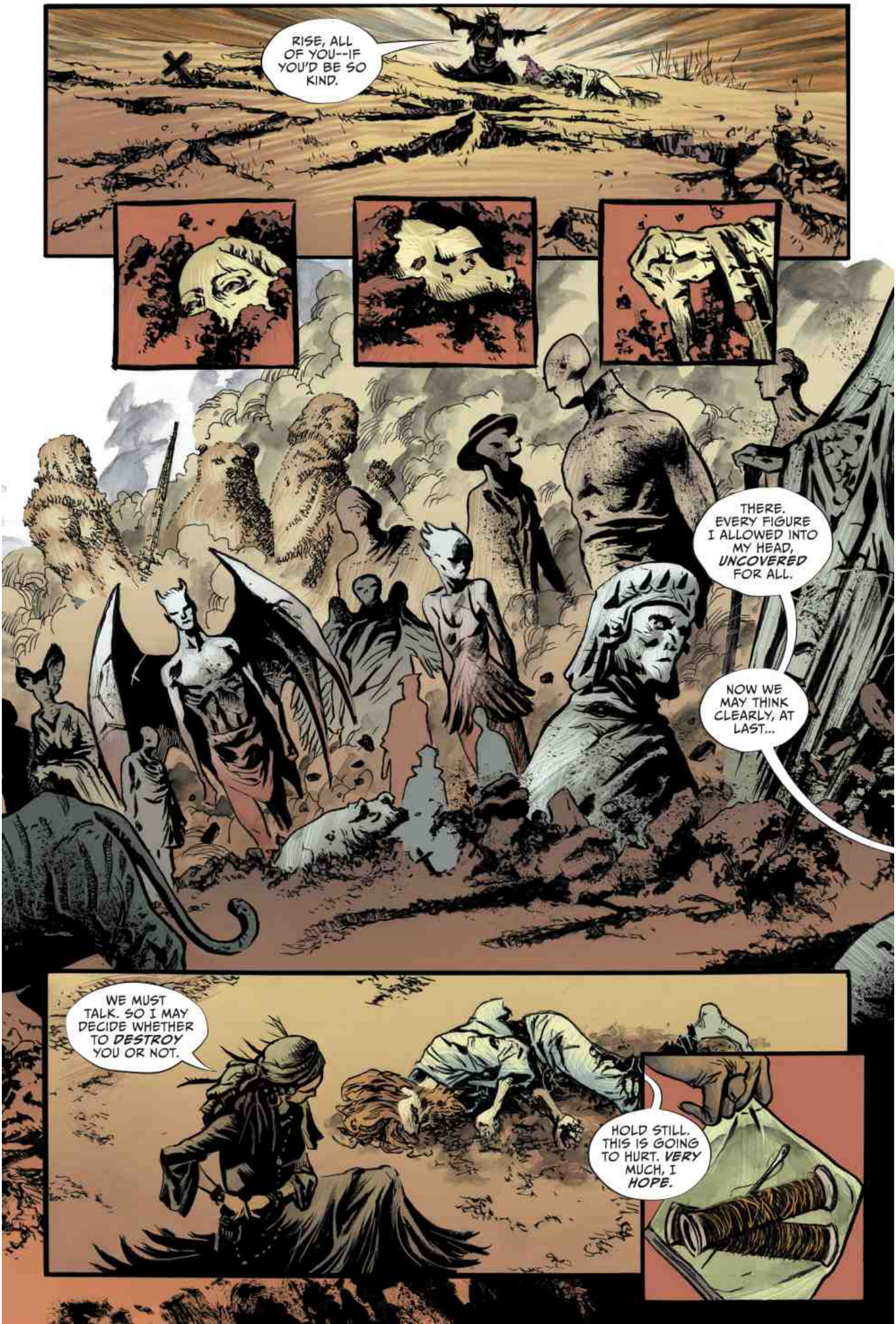
AH. SO YOU--
YES.
AND I DON'T SUPPOSE--
CERTAINLY NOT.
THAT'S A SHAME.
LUCIFER BROUGHT *RAVENS* HERE.
THEY ARE NOT HIS SYMBOL *ALONE*, YOU KNOW.

YEAAAGH!
GET OFF!
OFF!
I'M BLEEDING! LOOK, THAT'S MY BLOOD!
A SHARD OF MOON-LIGHT.
I'VE FOUND IT TO MAKE AN EXCELLENT PARING KNIFE.

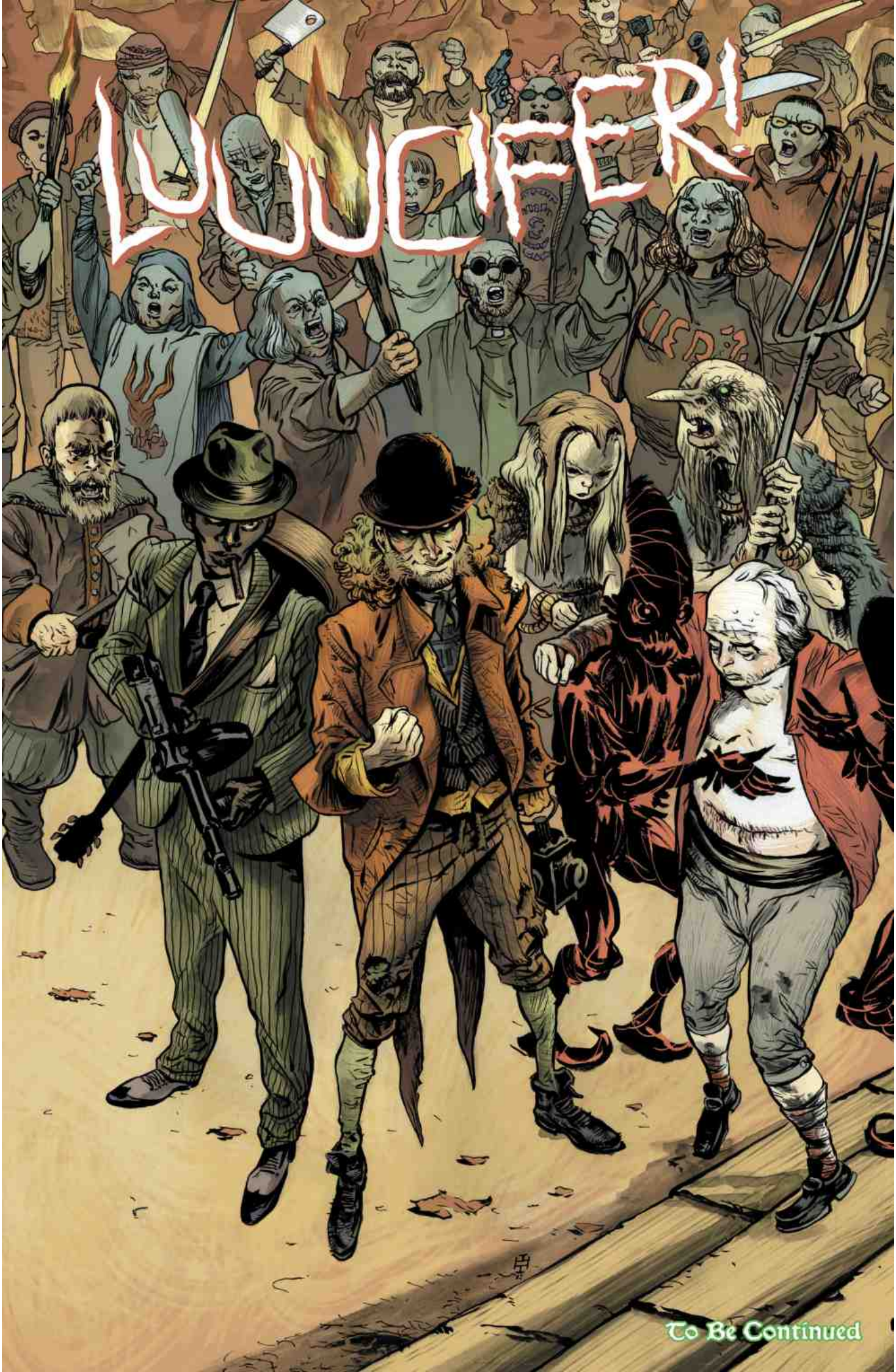

AWAY, AWAY!
GET ME AWAY!
AND RIDDANCE.
THEY WON'T GO FAR. THERE ISN'T FAR TO GO.
LUCIFER.
BLUGH?
YOU CAME HERE TO EXCAVATE MY MIND. THOSE WOULD BE MY MEMORIES, YES? ALL THOSE BURIED STATUES.
YOU ALLOW ME NO PEACE IN DEATH. AFTER EVERYTHING YOU MADE ME SUFFER IN LIFE.
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE DRIVEN YOU TO THIS MADNESS?
CURUBUH.
CALIBAN...?
CURSE YOU, LUCIFER...WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM BEFORE YOU CAME HERE?
WHAT DID YOU MAKE HIM DO?

He sought to bring *hope* into her own skull.
As though that were something for which she cared.
IT MAY HAVE BEEN AN ASSET, NONETHELESS.
WHAT ARE THESE THINGS YOU SPEAK TO WHEN ALONE?
I HEAR YOU OFTEN SEEKING THEIR COUNSEL.
I was raised in *exile* on an island. With no companions beyond my mother, a few renegade spirits, and the sea.
She made me these to *teach* me of our past. So that I knew there was a world *beyond*.
She was *cruel* sometimes. As parents can be.
But I have carried these with me, even when I have lost all else.
For I miss her.

She rarely spoke well of you--did you know? Did not wish for me to ever know you.
I HAVE BEEN TOLD I DON'T OFTEN ENDEAR. EVEN TO THOSE WHO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME.
Yet still you think that you can convince her to return to the world of the living?
YOU SAY YOURSELF--SHE WILL NOT WISH TO DISCOVER THAT YOU ARE KEEPING YOUR FATHER'S COMPANY OF LATE.
AND IF HOPE WILL NOT SUFFICE, I'VE FOUND MYSELF THAT HATE AND VENGEANCE MAKE FORMIDABLE MOTIVATORS.
You speak in riddles again.
I'LL BE CLEAR.
WHO EXILED YOU AND SHE TO THAT ISLAND?
SHE NEVER TOLD YOU THEN? YOU NEVER GUESSED?


RISE, ALL OF YOU--IF YOU'D BE SO KIND.
THERE. EVERY FIGURE I ALLOWED INTO MY HEAD, UNCOVERED FOR ALL.
NOW WE MAY THINK CLEARLY, AT LAST...
WE MUST TALK. SO I MAY DECIDE WHETHER TO DESTROY YOU OR NOT.
HOLD STILL. THIS IS GOING TO HURT. VERY MUCH, I HOPE.

AND SO THEY REMEMBER. REMEMBER *EVERYTHING.*
SO WHAT? WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO HER?
THEY STILL CAN'T *LEAVE* HERE. OUR MAN ON THE *OUTSIDE* HAS MADE SURE OF THAT.
WE'LL SOON SET THINGS TO RIGHTS, WON'T WE? AFTER ALL, THIS IS A PLACE WHERE *SYMBOLS* HOLD MUCH SWAY...
AND ALL OF US TOGETHER...WELL, A FEW PALTRY RAVENS WON'T STAND A CHANCE, WILL THEY?
AND *YOU* NOW ALL REMEMBER WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS, DON'T YOU?
WHO BROUGHT YOU HERE. WHO *TORTURED* YOU. WHO'S DOING THIS TO YOU NOW.
HNN.
WHO MUST WE *PUNISH?*
LUCIFER...
YOU HEARD HIM, LADIES AND GENTS...


LUUCIFER!
To Be Continued

Lucifer

"THE MAN WHO BESTED THE DEVIL, NOT ONCE BUT TWICE"

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Curated for THE SANDMAN UNIVERSE by Neil Gaiman

NEXT ISSUE:
A LONG-AWAITED COMEUPPANCE

The birds go missing, the moon falls in love, and the sky is furious.

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